

Fil-Am Community Church
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Life's Healing Choices:
The Beatitudes - Part 5

THE TRANSFORMATION CHOICE

We've been in this series for five weeks where we're looking at Life's Healing Choices, which are the eight Beatitudes.

Today, we're going to look at the fifth Beatitude which is "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness sake...*"

We're going to look at the five phases that God uses to change us, which parallel to the five steps we're looking at, this can be found in Genesis chapter 31-32. This is **really kind of a review** of where we've been so far.

If God's going to change you, make the changes in your life, here is the first phase.

1. The first phase is Conflict.

A friend of mine (July) was telling me that him and his wife (Nelly) were in an argument just the other night.

He said it ended when his wife came crawling to him on her hands and knees. I said I see, can you explain how she did that, he said yes, she said come out from under the bed you coward!

Ok seriously let's get into the session; it always starts with a struggle. Saints we need to realize that sometimes God uses your struggles in order to get your attention.

If you're experiencing any kind of conflict in your life right now, you are more than likely in **stage one, which is** the conflict stage.

Let me give you a little background of the text we're going to look at today. Jacob's entire life can be summed up in one word: **Conflict**.

He came out of the womb fighting with his twin brother Esau. In fact he was holding on. He was second born, his twin brother Esau was born first. When Esau came out of the womb, Jacob was holding on to his ankle.

They named him "**Supplanter**" or Jacob, the deceiver, the cheater.

From that point forward, Jacob and Esau fought. In fact, Jacob cheated his brother out of his inheritance, over a bowl of soup. With the help of his mother also tricked his father into giving him his brother's blessing.

So Jacob and his brother were estranged from each other their entire life.

As you study the life of Jacob, Jacob is always in some type of conflict. Conflict with his brother, conflict with his father-in-law, conflict with his brothers-in-law, conflict with God. He's having conflict everywhere.

God is trying to get his attention.

Where we pick up the story here in Genesis 31 and 32, Jacob is between a rock and a hard place. What's happened is he has multiple conflicts going on at the same time.

First, he's got a conflict going on with his father-in-law. His father-in-law was named Laban. Laban actually cheated Jacob and Jacob ended up serving his father-in-law fourteen years to marry his wife. He actually married two daughters Leah and Rachel. There was bad blood between Laban and Jacob. So he's fighting with this guy.

Then, he's also fighting with his brother who had never forgiven him for stealing his inheritance and his blessing.

The Bible says in Genesis 31:1-2, "*Jacob heard that Laban's sons [that's his brothers-in-law] were saying 'Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all the wealth [they were jealous] from what belonged to our father. [He's got a conflict with his brothers-in-law.] And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.'*"

He's figuring out, this isn't working out real good. So he decides he's going to take all his family, he's got eleven sons by now, he's got two wives who were both Laban's daughters. He's become very rich. He's got a lot of flocks full of sheep, goats, and things like that. He says, were out of here!

So he gets his whole family, this entire group, and he says we're quietly leaving, and takes off. When Laban, the father-in-law, hears about it he gets upset. Why? You're taking the grandkids! Not just the livestock, my daughters, but also my Grandkids.

So Laban starts after Jacob to get him back. That's part of the battle.

On the other hand, Jacob goes, I don't have any place to go except go back home. But I've been estranged from my brother my entire life. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm going to send some gifts on ahead to my brother Esau. It's going to say: "Esau, your brother is coming home!" Maybe if I send him enough gifts he'll just forget about the fact that I stole his inheritance.

So he sends the gifts on ahead to Esau. The messengers come back to Jacob and Jacob asks, How did it go?

They say, Not so good. He took the gifts but he's coming after you with an army of four hundred men!

"The messengers returned to Jacob and said, 'We went to your brother Esau and now he's coming to meet you with an army of four hundred men.' Jacob was terrified at the news."

Jacobs entire life has been running from one conflict or another. Now he can't run any more. His father-in-law is coming after him one way and his brother is coming after him another way. He's reaping a lifetime of choices. It's out of his hands now. **That's stage one: Conflict.**

Notice the next verse. Here's what Jacob prayed. He's at the end of his rope, caught between a rock and a hard place and he prays this,

Genesis 32:10-11, (NIV)

"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children."

He's scared to death of the conflict.

What's happened here is, he is forced into the very first choice we've looked at in week one with Pastor Rolly. **We call this the Reality Choice.**

"Realize I am not God. I admit that I'm powerless to control the tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable." This is where Jacob is in the first phase.

Until you get to this stage in life, **nothing is going to change.** Until you realize, this conflict that I'm in right now, I'm powerless to change it. **It isn't going to get any better.** In fact, it's probably going to get worse.

When you come to God like Jacob, "God! Lord!

- ✓ I don't deserve this.
- ✓ I'm a cheat,
- ✓ And I've run from conflict all my life.
- ✓ But, God, I've got to have your help because
- ✓ I'm going under for the last time!"

Some of you have been there when you are sitting in the Emergency room, or you get that call in the middle of the night, and you drop to the floor and say Please Father God, don't take my child... Please save my marriage...Please Father God I can't make it anymore, I need your help...

That's called the **Reality Choice.** We call that the Reality Choice because the first Beatitude we looked at was Mathew 5:3, "*God blesses those who realize their need for him.*" That's the starting point.

Nothing happens in your life until you get out of denial and you realize

- ✓ I cannot solve this on my own.
- ✓ I cannot make it right.
- ✓ I can't make this marriage right.
- ✓ I can't make this friendship right.
- ✓ I can't make it right with my kids or my parents or my brother or the boss or whoever. **It is all a mess.**
- ✓ God, I need your help!"

Jacob goes, "I'm going to stop denying. I'm going to stop running. I'm going to admit I have a need. *"God blesses those who realize their need for him."*

Jacob says, I've got four hundred people coming after me this way and I've got a family behind me mad at me because I took the grandkids. So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to separate my party into two parts. Half of my family will go with this group, and half of my family will go with this group. I'll send them across the river. Because if my bother comes and attacks us he might kill half of my family, but the other half will live. He might kill half of my flocks, but the other half will live." It's kind of divide and conquer. You might want to read this whole story, Genesis 31-32. He divides them all up into two groups and he sends them over the brook Jabbok, a river. But he stays on this side, by himself, to spend the night.

Now we're going to come to the next phase that happens in growth. This is stage two in Life's Healing Choices.

2. The second phase in growth is, when you move from Conflict to Crisis.

So with his family ahead of him, he's all alone in this camp by the brook Jabbok, and he gets in a fight that night. He gets in a wrestling fight. It's an unusual wrestling match because it's actually a wrestling match with God.

Genesis 32:22-25 (NIV)

"That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and

a man wrestled with him till daybreak When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man."

The **Crisis** is a struggle with God.

What's going on here?

- ✓ His biggest conflict **is not** really with his brother
- ✓ His biggest conflict **is not** really with his father-in-law or his wife
- ✓ His biggest struggle is really with **God**.

God doesn't mind having a wrestling match with you, because wrestling is a contact sport.

It means you're up close and personal.

God would rather have you up close wrestling with him saying things like "God, I don't like this in my life!" Then you have distant and apathetic. He'd rather have you going, "God, I don't like the situation I'm going through right now! I'm ticked off, God! I'm mad.

He'd rather have you up close and angry than far away and apathetic.

How do we know that this man that Jacob wrestled with was really God? Because the Bible tells us in the book of Hosea, chapter 12, *"Before Jacob was born he struggled with his brother. And when he became a man he even fought with God."*

You know the problems you're having in your life right now?

- ✓ The **crisis**,
- ✓ The **conflict**,
- ✓ The **difficulty** you're going through?

That is not the real problem. That problem you're having...

- ✓ With your kids,

- ✓ With your husband
- ✓ With your wife,
- ✓ With your friends,
- ✓ With your finances,
- ✓ With your health – They are the **Symptom**.

Your real struggle is with **God**.

- ✓ It is who's going to be God in your life?
- ✓ Does God have a right to tell you what to do?
- ✓ Does God have a right to call the shots in your life?
- ✓ All your life, your war, your battle has caused struggle and strife in your life and that causes stress.
- ✓ Your biggest problem is not your dad or your mom or your brother or sister or your wife or anybody else.

Your real struggle is you're wrestling with **in in fact with God**.

That's why you have to move from phase one – **Conflict** with others – to **Crisis** – struggle with God. And you've got to realize it and admit it.

- ✓ You don't wait
- ✓ You don't trust God
- ✓ You don't pray
- ✓ You don't think God will provide for your needs
- ✓ You get in a hurry.

You get out there and struggle.

We get in a hurry and **we take matters into our own hands**.
That's what Jacob has done all his life.

God said I want to bless Jacob but he didn't believe it; what does he do? He **cheats** his brother out of his blessing.

God said I'll take care of you. What does he do? "I'm afraid my father is going to deceitfully scam me so I'm going to leave him." And on and on, it's an endless cycle...

I want you to think of the problem that you're facing right now. Regardless of whatever that problem is in your life it boils down to two things?

- ✓ Will I **trust God** to take care of the situation?
- ✓ Will I **obey God** and do the right thing **even if** it doesn't make sense?

If I don't there's a word for that: I'm **struggling** with God.

The fact is, we rarely change until our pain exceeds the fear of change.

That leads us into the second step. We looked at this in week two. Week two is the **Hope Choice**.

- ✓ Earnestly believe that **God exists** and that
- ✓ **I matter** to him and that
- ✓ He has the **power to help** me.”

Phase One – **Conflict** with others.

Phase Two – **Crisis** with God.

Phase Three – **Commitment**.

In phase three I finally **Tap- Out** and I commit to God's changes.

- ✓ I commit to God's changes.
- ✓ I **hang on** and I **hold on** and I **don't give up**
- ✓ I say I am going to go with God's plan if it kills me.
- ✓ God, I'm going your way because I want you to help me change.
- ✓ I want you to bless my life.

Notice the unusual wrestling match between God and man. *“Then the man [that's God] said ‘Let me go, for it is dawn.’ [They'd been wrestling all night. But Jacob panted [he's out of breath], ‘I won't let you go unless you bless me.’”*

3. The Third Phase is, Commitment.

When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of Britain with his Roman legions, he took a bold and decisive step to ensure the success of his military venture. Ordering his men to march to the edge of the cliffs of Dover and commanded them to look down at the water below. To their amazement, they saw every ship in which they crossed the channel engulfed in flames. Caesar had deliberately cut off any possibility of retreat. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to their own continent, there was nothing for them to do but to advance and conquer, and that is exactly what they did.

OK, getting back to the story of Jacob wrestling with God...

Genesis 32: 25-26, (NIV)

²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Ok, God, I'm serious about this change. You've got to help me.

- ✓ I can't get out of it or go on with it.
- ✓ I'm not going on with this habit.
- ✓ I'm not going on with this relationship or this career.
- ✓ I **want** your blessing in my life.

He says, "God, **I won't let go until** you bless me!" Hear the passion in that? God loves passionate praying.

He hates "Dear God, would you kind of, sort of, please help me out?" What God loves is passionate praying.

- ✓ God, I am not letting go until you help me.
- ✓ I have got to get help!
- ✓ I'm **not letting go** until you bless me."

That's commitment, the **Commitment Choice**.

We looked at that in week three. “Consciously choose to commit all my life and my will to Christ’s care and control.” Nothing is going to happen in your life until you get to step three.

God obviously has the answer to every one of your prayers. Why doesn’t he just give it to you the first time you ask for it? “God, I need this...” *Boom!* It’s there.

- ✓ Why does he let it go on till **dawn**?
- ✓ Why is there always a **delay** to your prayers?
- ✓ Why is there always a **struggle**?
- ✓ Why does God let it go on?

God could have ended it. What’s he doing? He lets the struggle go on. Why doesn’t God answer your prayers immediately?

Because, he wants to know if you’re really serious.

We need to remember we didn’t get that messed up overnight; it took you years to get as screwed up as you are.

You didn’t just make one bad choice. You made **a lot** of bad choices. It was a **combination** of events that led you to the predicament you are in...

So God has to peel the onion, one layer at a time. You don’t build a problem in your life for twenty years then instantly end it with a pill, or a drink...

If you’re serious about letting God change your life in the Commitment Phase, you’ve got to **hang on**. You’ve got to hold on and **don’t give up** until God blesses you.

You don’t just say, God save my marriage, and pray it one time and then give up. Many people, most people miss God’s best because they give up too soon.

They don’t make it till dawn. They give up in the struggle. Forget it! It isn’t worth it!

- ✓ I'm giving up on this dream.
- ✓ I'm giving up on this relationship.
- ✓ I'm giving up on this change.
- ✓ "I'll never be able to change."

Don't do it. Stay with phase three, **Commitment**.

I commit to God changing me. I'm not letting go until you bless me.

That takes us to the next phase. Phase four.

- ✓ Phase one: **Conflict** with others.
- ✓ Phase two: **Crisis** with God.
- ✓ Phase three: **Commitment** to change.
- ✓ Phase four: **Confession**.

I admit I am the problem.

- ✓ Not my spouse.
- ✓ Not my friends.
- ✓ Or my mom or my dad.
- ✓ Not my kids.

I am the problem.

4. The Fourth Phase the Breakthrough step is: **Confession.**

How does God respond to our brokenness? The Bible says in Psalms 34:18,

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

The Prussian King Fredrick the Great was once touring a Berlin prison, the prisoners fell at his knees to proclaim their innocence, except for one man, who remained in the corner all alone and silent.

The King called to him, Why are you here? Armed robbery, your majesty, was his reply.

Are you guilty the King asked? Yes Sir, I deserve my punishment.

The King summoned the jailer and ordered him to release this guilty wretch at once.

I will not have him kept in this prison where he will corrupt all the fine innocent people who occupy it.

Phase Five in God's changing you is called: Conversion.

5. The **Recovery Stage.**

In conversion I get a new identity.

God picks up the pieces and replaces the pieces with peace. I move from **conflict** with others to **crisis** with God to **commitment** that I'm going to change and trust God with those changes. Then, the **confession**, that I am the problem. Then God says, Ok now comes the **conversion**. You're going to get a brand new identity.

I love God's response to Jacob's brokenness and confession. The Bible says this in Genesis 32:28,

²⁸ *Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but **Israel**, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."*

This is the...

- ✓ The scoundrel,
- ✓ The crook,
- ✓ The deceiver.

However, *your name will no longer be Jacob. It's going to be Israel.*"

Jacob by this time had twelve sons and they became the twelve tribes of Israel. *“Then he blessed him there. Jacob called the place Peniel saying, ‘It is because I saw the face of God.’”*

What happens in phase five in your life? When you get to the conversion phase?

When you start following these Beatitudes step by step and the healing choices step by step as we have just seen them outlined in this man's life.

Jacob was renamed Israel. Israel means prince of God. Everybody else saw

- ✓ A Defeated,
- ✓ Mean spirited,
- ✓ Cheating,
- ✓ Lying,
- ✓ Manipulator.

God says I see deeper than that. I see in you a **PRINCE** of **God**. Beneath all your sins and all your hang-ups I see a prince.

So Jacob gets a new identity in conversion.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. The old is passed away. The new has come.”

All of this leads us to this week's beatitude. ***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”***

When you're hungry and thirsty and have to have it at **all cost**, hunger and thirst for righteousness. Let me say it another way. “I'm not letting go of you until you bless me, God!” That's what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

A friend of mine said this week, I am going to “Ride it until the **wheels fall off**”

Exactly what Jacob did, I'm not letting go, I'm not settling for second best. I want your blessing on my life.

This is the **Transformation step**. “**Voluntarily** submit to every change that God wants to make in my life. And humbly ask him to remove my character defects.”

We Talked about it in one of the small groups, last week and said, the person who leaves **everything** in the hands of God, will see God's hands in **everything!**

Thank God I'm not what I used to be. God isn't finished with anyone of us yet. That is the transformation process.

Remember when God and Jacob were wrestling, the Bible says that God dislocated Jacob's hip. He pulled it out of the socket. The Bible says this, “*The sun rose as Jacob left Peniel and he was limping because of his hip.*” Circle the word “limping”.

What is the **significance of his limp**? After you have had a genuine encounter with God, you're going to have a limp. What is the significance of this limp? Three things.

One, for his entire life Jacob had run from conflict.

- ✓ He'd run from his brother.
- ✓ He'd run from his dad.
- ✓ He'd run from his wife.
- ✓ He had run from his father-in-law.
- ✓ He'd run from God.

God said, “I will fix that. **No more running**. I'm just going to touch your hip so you will limp the rest of your life. You're not running any more. You'll never solve a problem by running from it.” So he touches his hip. He gives him a limp.

Second, it was a daily reminder to **trust God**. He touched him on his thigh. You know what your thigh muscle is?

- ✓ It is the **strongest** muscle in your body.
- ✓ It's the **biggest** muscle in your body.

And God touched Jacob at the point of his greatest strength. And he said, you're no longer going to rely on self-strength any more.

I'm going to touch you at the point of **your greatest strength**.

You're going to remember that you've got to depend on me for strength. He could no longer run under his own power, he now needed to depend upon God.

OK so now what..

We realize that we move from **Conflict** with others to **Crisis** with God... Then we come to the **Commitment** stage that I'm going to change and trust God with those changes.

Then, the **Confession**, that I am the problem.

When all those other steps are complete then comes **Conversion**.

You're going to get a brand new identity.

Who needs a new Identity today? Who would like to be blessed today? You can right here right now...

Let us Pray...